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ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY.

At a numerous Meeting of the Members of the **RALEIGH TRAVELLER'S CLUB**, and several other Gentlemen, held at the *Thatched House*, on Monday, the 24th of May,

JOHN BARROW, Esq., in the Chair,

It was submitted that, among the numerous literary and scientific societies established in the British metropolis, one was still wanting to complete the circle of scientific institutions, whose sole object should be the promotion and diffusion of that most important and entertaining branch of knowledge, **GEOGRAPHY**.

That a new and useful Society might therefore be formed, under the name of **THE GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON**.

That the interest excited by this department of science is universally felt; that its advantages are of the first importance to mankind in general, and paramount to the welfare of a maritime nation like Great Britain, with its numerous and extensive foreign possessions.

That its decided utility in conferring just and distinct notions of the physical and political relations of our globe must be obvious to every one; and is the more enhanced by this species of knowledge being attainable without much difficulty, while at the same time it affords a copious source of rational amusement.

That although there is a vast store of geographical information existing in Great Britain, yet it is so scattered and dispersed, either in large books that are not generally accessible, or in the bureaux of the public departments, or in the possession of private individuals, as to be nearly unavailable to the public.

The objects, then, of such a Society as is now suggested would be,

1. To collect, register, and digest, and to print for the use of the Members, and the public at large, in a cheap form and at certain intervals, such new, interesting, and useful facts and discoveries as the Society may have in its possession, and may, from time to time, acquire.

2. To accumulate gradually a library of the best books on Geography—a selection of the best Voyages and Travels—a complete collection of Maps and Charts, from the earliest period of rude geographical delineations to the most improved of the present time; as well as all such documents and materials as may convey the best information to persons intending to visit foreign countries; it being of the greatest utility to a traveller to be aware, previously to his setting out, of what has been already done, and what is still wanting, in the countries he may intend to visit.

3. To procure specimens of such instruments as experience has shown to be most useful, and best adapted to the compendious stock of a traveller, by consulting which, he may make himself familiar with their use.

4. To prepare brief instructions for such as are setting out on their travels; pointing out the parts most desirable to be visited; the best and most practicable means of proceeding thither; the researches most essential to make; phenomena to be observed; the subjects of natural history most desirable to be procured; and to obtain all such information as may tend to the extension of our geographical knowledge. And it is hoped that the Society may ultimately be enabled, from its funds, to render pecuniary assistance to such travellers as may require it, in order to facilitate the attainment of some particular object of research.

5. To correspond with similar societies that may be established in different parts of the world; with foreign individuals engaged in geographical pursuits, and with the most intelligent British residents in the various remote settlements of the Empire.

6. To open a communication with all those philosophical and literary societies with which Geography is connected; for as all are fellow-labourers in the different departments of the same vineyard, their united efforts cannot fail mutually to assist each other.

The Meeting then proceeded to nominate a Provisional Committee to consider and propose resolutions to be submitted to a General Meeting.

AT a Meeting of the GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON, held at the Rooms of the *Horticultural Society*, Regent Street, on Friday the 16th of July,

J. BARROW, Esq. in the Chair;

The following Resolutions were adopted.

1. THAT the Society, having been honoured with the gracious patronage and permission of His Majesty, be called 'THE ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON.'

2. That the number of ordinary Members be not limited; but that the number of Honorary Foreign Members be limited, as shall hereafter be determined.

3. That the Council of the Society consist of a President, four Vice-Presidents, a Treasurer, two Secretaries, and twenty-one other Members to conduct the affairs of the Society.

4. That the election of the said Council and Officers be annual.

5. That the office of President be not held by the same individual for a longer period than two consecutive years, but that he be eligible for re-election after the lapse of one year.

6. That one of the four Vice-Presidents go out annually; he being eligible, however, for re-election after the lapse of one year: but the Treasurer and Secretaries may be annually re-elected.

7. That seven of the twenty-one other Members constituting the Council, go out annually, at the period of the General Election of the Officers of the Society.

8. That the Admission Fee of Members be 3*l.*, and the Annual Subscription 2*l.*; or both may be compounded for by one payment of 20*l.*

9. That such part of the Funds of the Society as may not be required for current expenses, be placed in the public securities, and vested in the names of three Trustees, to be hereafter appointed by the President and Council.

The Chairman then addressed the following Observations to the Meeting, explanatory of the general Views of the Society.

THE ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON being now established, the Provisional Committee cannot close its proceedings without adverting to the gratifying fact of there being enrolled, on the List of its Members, within so short a space of time, considerably more than Four Hundred names. From this great and increasing number, and still more from the general character of the Subscribers, it is fair to conclude that a favourable opinion has been formed of the utility likely to result from the labours of such a Society. The *degree* of utility, however, which will be really effected, the Committee deem it almost unnecessary to observe, must depend on the attention and assiduity which the President, the Vice-Presidents, and the Council may bestow on its concerns, quite as much as on the stock of knowledge they may bring to the consideration of the several subjects that will come before them. And not on the Council alone will depend the extent to which the useful labours of the Society may thus be carried, but in a very great degree also on the assistance which they may receive from the many individuals eminent in the Arts, Sciences, and Literature, and from the distinguished Officers of the Army and Navy, whose names appear on the List of Members.

The many opportunities that are afforded to Officers of the Army while on Service abroad, and the promptitude and ability with which they avail themselves of them (as the Office of the Quarter-Master-General and the Board of Ordnance so amply testify), are the best pledges of what may reasonably be expected from that quarter; and the more so since the Committee has had the satisfaction to witness the readiness with which so many distinguished Officers of the Royal Artillery and Engineers have come forward to join the Society.

With the same confidence the Committee look for aid from the Officers of the Sister Service, who on their own peculiar element in particular, will, it is hoped, be assisted by other experienced Navigators, whether of and belonging to the Corporation of Trinity, the

East-India Company, or to any other Maritime Service. On the exactitude of the minutest details of Hydrography must always depend the safety of Commerce and Navigation. Numerous dangers unquestionably exist in various parts of the ocean, that have not yet been ascertained, while others that have no existence still figure on our Charts, to the dread of Navigators. It has been well observed, that 'the man who points out, in the midst of the wide ocean, a single rock unknown before, is a benefactor of the human race;' and scarcely less so is he, who, after careful examination, is able to decide that a rock or shoal, which appears on a chart, is either misplaced, or has no existence.—These, it is true, may not be ranked among brilliant discoveries; but the smallest obstruction, whether rock or shoal, that exists in the ocean, may have been, and, so long as its exact position remains unascertained, is still likely to be, the cause of destruction to life and property. It may also be noticed that many practical observations are still desirable on the prevailing winds and currents, and more particularly on tides, of which there are various peculiarities among the islands and along the different coasts of the ocean, concerning which facts and observations are still wanting, for establishing one general theory that shall be found applicable to every part of the Globe.

Every accession, therefore, to hydrographical knowledge,—a real danger discovered—a fictitious one demolished—or a peculiarity ascertained—must be of great importance to navigation, and a fit object for promulgation by the Society.

The Committee, however, are also willing to hope, that many valuable contributions on geographical subjects will be received from other individuals, whether on the List of Members or not, than those who are thus professionally qualified and invited to furnish them; particularly from such of their countrymen as have permanent residences abroad, from the various public authorities in the British colonies, and from those who have travelled, or may yet travel, in foreign countries. It is not for the Committee to specify in detail the various points of information which should engage the attention of the traveller; but they may observe that every species of information, connected either with Physical Geography or Statistics, if it have only accuracy to recommend it, will be acceptable; and in cases where the stock of information, generally, in the hands of any individual, is not of sufficient magnitude or importance to form a volume for publication, if sent to the Society, it will be made available, in some form or other, in its Transactions. The routes, for example, which travellers may have pursued through portions of countries hitherto but imperfectly known, or inaccurately described,—the objects of Natural History that may have presented themselves,—the meteorological and magnetic phenomena that may have been observed—the nature of the soil and its products, of its forests, rivers, plains, mountains, and other general features of its surface; but above all, the latitudes and longitudes of particular places which the Resident or Traveller may have had the means of determining to a degree of precision on which he may rely;

—such notices of detached portions of the Earth's surface, where regular surveys cannot be held, are of extreme importance, as furnishing the only means by which any thing approaching to correctness in our general Maps can be attained. And the Committee cannot, therefore, entertain a doubt, that it will constitute a part of the Transactions of the Society to publish such detached pieces of information bearing on each of these points, as may be thought of sufficient interest and importance to be communicated for the use of its Members, and of the public at large.

But there are many other means, besides those now mentioned, by which geography may be advanced, which are too numerous to be here specified at length. In addition to the few, however, which have been noticed here, as well as in the printed prospectus already circulated, the following points may be briefly stated, as being among the most important that will probably engage the attention of the Society:—

1. The composition of Maps illustrative of particular branches of geographical knowledge, more especially those relating to orology, hydrology, and geology.

2. The establishment of new divisions of the Earth's surface, formed upon philosophical principles, and adapted to different departments of science; more especially as regards those divisions which are founded on physical and geological characters, on climate, and on distinctions of the human race, or of language.

3. A more uniform and systematic orthography than has hitherto been observed, in regard to the names of cities and other objects; and a more precise and copious vocabulary, than we at present possess, of such objects.

4. The preparation and improvement of road-books for different countries, of gazetteers, of geographical and statistical tables, and all such matters as are of general utility.

The Committee cannot take upon itself to pronounce to which, of so many important considerations as have been enumerated, the attention of the Society should be *first* directed; the order of precedence must obviously, in some measure, depend on the means, rather than the wishes, of the Council. But the Committee are willing to hope that, sooner or later, most or all of the subjects mentioned will engage that attention of the Members to which they appear to be fairly entitled; and that the range of investigation will in no respect be less comprehensive than the title of the Society implies.

In making these observations, which have reference chiefly to facts, the Committee wish, however, to guard themselves against any supposition that might be entertained, of their being hostile to theory; or of recommending to the Society to limit the reception of communications to such only as are the result of actual observation and experiment. On the contrary they are fully aware that great benefits have been, and may yet be, derived from speculative Geography. Theories that do not involve obvious absurdities or impossibilities, but are supported by reasonable probabilities, may serve as guides to conduct to impor-

tant discoveries ; by exciting curiosity they stimulate inquiry, and inquiry generally leads to truth. And reasonings and suggestions, therefore, in regard to parts of the world deserving of minuter investigation, which are little known, or of which no good account has yet been given, the routes to be observed in examining them, the chief subjects of inquiry, and best modes of overcoming the probable difficulties that may occur in the research,—all these will form proper subjects for admission into the proceedings of the Society.

And lastly, The Committee having reason to think that, at no great distance of time, the Society will be able to obtain suitable apartments for the reception of Books, Maps, Charts, and Instruments, they would venture to suggest, that donations of such materials as may tend to the elucidation and extension of Geographical Science, would afford facilities to the attainment of its views ; and they are willing to hope that, aided by such means, a Library of Books and Manuscripts on Geographical Subjects, with a collection of Charts and Maps, may be formed, that will not be undeserving of public approbation and patronage.

The Admission Fee and Annual Subscription, or, in lieu thereof, the Composition, to be paid to Messrs. COCKS and BIDDULPHS, Bankers, 43, Charing Cross ; or to the SECRETARY, 21, Regent Street, to whom also Applications for Admission to the Society may be addressed.
